

NATI RESOURCES

VANDALISM AND THE SENIOR CITIZEN

Vandalism is the willful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement, or defacement of any public or private property, without the consent of the owner—costing schools, homeowners, businesses, youth, and others more than \$15 billion a year. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998)

When compared with other age groups, persons age 65 or older were disproportionately affected by property crimes. More than nine in ten crimes against the elderly were property crimes, such as vandalism. (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 1998).

Annually on average, 2.5 million property crimes—home, vehicle, and property crimes, including vandalism—against persons ages 65 or older occurred (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 1998).

Juveniles and Vandalism:

Law enforcement made approximately 136,500 arrests of juveniles for vandalism. This represents 44% of all vandalism arrests. Most vandals are young people (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000).

Female proportions of all juvenile arrests for vandalism increased to 12% in 1997 (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000).

In 1997, 49% of vandalism cases referred to juvenile courts were handled outside of the courtroom—meaning the juvenile served in probation, community service or similar social program (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, September 2004).

About half of all cases referred to juvenile court intake are handled informally, or without charges. Most informally processed cases are dismissed (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, June 2003).

Juveniles are more likely to commit crimes in groups and are more likely to be arrested than are adults (Crime in the United States, 2002).

Vandalism accounted for 105,900, or 43% of all juvenile arrests in 2002 (Crime in the United States, 2002)

In 2002, juveniles were involved in approximately 4 of 10 vandalism arrests (Crime in the United States, 2002).

Seniors and Vandalism:

According to the National Institute of Justice, neighborhood physical conditions, such as vandalism and graffiti, contribute to resident concerns for personal safety and their desire to leave their neighborhood (Impacts of Specific Incivilities on Responses to Crime and Local Commitment, 1979-1994).

A study by the Consortium for Political and Social Research draws a strong correlation between social disorder (teen vagrancy and vandalism) and residential fear of crime, victimization, and negative neighborhood perceptions (Evaluation of the Impact of Innovative Policing Programs on Social Disorder in Seven Cities in the United States, 1983-1990).

A Fall, 2000 Gallup Poll stated that 12% of all US households had had one's home, car, or property vandalized. In addition, more than one fourth of these crimes were not reported to police (The Gallup Poll, 2000)

Vandalism results in local governments spending tax dollars for clean up efforts—money that could better serve other social services (Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, 2004)

In 2000, it is estimated that 6.1 million households in the United States were vandalized—most unreported (Crime and Victimization in America Statistical Overview, The National Center for Victims of Crime, 2002).

Reasons for Vandalism:

- Feeling a need to fit in
- Please a friend
- Parent retribution/Defiance
- Backlash to pressures at home
- Peer pressure/acceptance
- For fun
- Counter low self esteem
- Identify turf or territory (gang related)
- Anger/Revenge
- Boredom

To Counter Vandalism:

- Stay active in your community to feel safer and to make your neighborhood safer.
- Train citizens to recognize/report suspicious and criminal activities in their neighborhood.
- Join a Neighborhood/Apartment/Window Watch, a Triad, or a Citizen Patrol.
- Report broken street lights, clean up parks and vacant lots and lobby local government for better public lighting.
- Start a clean-up crew. Ask local businesses to donate supplies for covering graffiti, or tools and equipment for repairing vandalized property.
- Write articles on the cost of vandalism and graffiti, their impact on neighborhoods and school/other budgets for activities, and how the courts—juvenile and adult—treat vandals.
- Start a vandalism hotline in cooperation with law enforcement and school officials that lets callers anonymously report incidents of vandalism and gives tips about vandals.
- Work with your community to adopt a street or park monthly. Clean up, plant trees, bushes, and flowers. Repair equipment and install trash containers.

Resources:

National Crime Prevention Council

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202)466-6272
(202)296-1356 (fax)
www.ncpc.org

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs
Juvenile Justice / Delinquency Prevention
810 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531
(202)307-5911
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

1230 West Peachtree Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404)815-5700
(404)815-5789 (fax)
www.bgca.org

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

PO Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
(800)851-3420
(301)519-5212 (fax)
www.ncjrs.org

Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

1010 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901
(203)323-8987
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